

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-19 are pending. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended, and new claims 8-19. Support for the amendments to claim 1 and new claims 8-19 can be found, for example, in the present specification at page 4, lines 14 to 18, page 23, lines 22 to 26, and in original claims 1, 2 and 4-7. No new matter is added. In view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Personal Interview

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended to Applicants' representatives by Examiners Hauth and Johnson during the February 5, 2009 Personal Interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated in the following remarks.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Chu and Minami

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 4,877,840 to Chu ("Chu") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2003/0069320 to Minami et al. ("Minami"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 1 recites "[a] method for granulating a flexible polyolefin resin, comprising: melting a resin composition comprising a flexible polyolefin resin obtained by polymerizing an α -olefin with 3 to 20 carbon atoms using a metallocene catalyst; and melt-kneading the resin composition while cooling the resin to a temperature of the melting point (T_m -D) of the resin or less; wherein the resin composition is free of modifying agents" (emphasis added).

Chu and Minami do not disclose or suggest such a method.

As indicated above, claim 1 is directed to a method in which a polyolefin resin composition is melted and then melt-kneaded while cooling, in the absence of a modifying

agent. The Office Action relies on Chu for its disclosure of a method in which a polyolefin resin is melted and mixed, while cooling the resin to a temperature below the melting point of the polyolefin resin. *See* Office Action, pages 2 to 3; Chu, Abstract. However, as discussed during the February 5, 2009 Personal Interview, the method of Chu is distinctly different from the method of claim 1, because the method of Chu requires that the polyolefin resin be combined with large amounts of a modifying agent. *See* Chu, column 1, lines 44 to 49. Claim 1 clearly excludes a modifying agent (an essential element in the method of Chu) from the employed resin composition.

In the Examples of Chu, granules of polyethylene modified with large amounts of a polyisobutylene modifying agent are formed. *See, e.g.,* Chu, column 5, lines 45 to 63. As discussed above, modifying agents are excluded from claim 1. Applicants further note that only polyethylene is exemplified as a polyolefin, while claim 1 requires a polymer of an α -olefin with 3 to 20 carbon atoms. Moreover, Applicants note that the large amounts of polyisobutylene employed in the method of Chu would result in migration of the polyisobutylene to the surface of the granules. This would make the granules tacky and difficult to handle – a result that is avoided by the method of claim 1, as discussed below.

As discussed in the present specification, when a flexible polyolefin resin is granulated into granules having a size that is easy to handle, generally the granules tend to adhere among themselves and form lumps or blocks. *See* present specification, page 1, lines 18 to 26. This difficulty has been addressed by handling the granules at lower temperatures or application of modifying agents, such as release agents – countermeasures that decrease production efficiency. *See* present specification, page 1, line 26 to page 2, line 4. The method of claim 1 overcomes the difficulties in handling when manufacturing flexible polyolefin granules, without requiring the cumbersome and potentially expensive measures of temperature control and application of modifying agents. Chu fails to disclose or suggest a

method as recited in claim 1, in which use of modifying agent is excluded, or recognize the benefits stemming therefrom.

For the reasons discussed above, Chu fails to disclose or suggest each and every feature of claim 1. Minami does not remedy the deficiencies of Chu. The Office Action relies on Minami for its disclosure of particular polyolefins. *See* Office Action, pages 4 to 5. However, Minami, like Chu, fails to disclose or suggest a method in which a polyolefin resin composition is melted and then melt-kneaded while cooling, in the absence of a modifying agent. Accordingly, the combination of references fails to disclose or suggest each and every feature of claim 1.

As explained, claim 1 would not have been rendered obvious by Chu and Minami. Claims 2, 4, 6 and 7 depend from claim 1 and, thus, also would not have been rendered obvious by Chu and Minami. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

B. Chu and Miller

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 5 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Chu in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,469,188 to Miller et al. ("Miller"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

For the reasons discussed above, Chu fails to disclose or suggest each and every feature of claim 1. Miller does not remedy the deficiencies of Chu. The Office Action relies on Miller for its disclosure of particular polyolefins. *See* Office Action, pages 4 to 5. However, Miller, like Chu, fails to disclose or suggest a method in which a polyolefin resin composition is melted and then melt-kneaded while cooling, in the absence of a modifying agent. Accordingly, the combination of references fails to disclose or suggest each and every feature of claim 1.

As explained, claim 1 would not have been rendered obvious by Chu and Miller.

Claims 2, 5 and 7 depend from claim 1 and, thus, also would not have been rendered obvious by Chu and Miller. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

New Claims

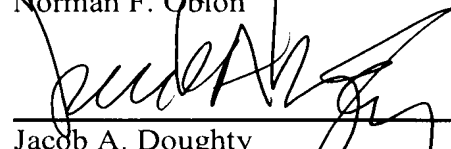
By this Amendment, new claims 8-19 are presented. Independent claim 8 recites "[a] method for granulating a flexible polyolefin resin, comprising: melting a resin composition consisting of a flexible polyolefin resin obtained by polymerizing an α -olefin with 3 to 20 carbon atoms using a metallocene catalyst; and melt-kneading the resin composition while cooling the resin to a temperature of the melting point (T_m -D) of the resin or less" (emphasis added). Independent claim 14 recites "[a] method for granulating a flexible polyolefin resin, comprising: melting a resin composition consisting essentially of a flexible polyolefin resin obtained by polymerizing an α -olefin with 3 to 20 carbon atoms using a metallocene catalyst; and melt-kneading the resin composition while cooling the resin to a temperature of the melting point (T_m -D) of the resin or less" (emphasis added). That is, in the methods of claims 8 and 14, a resin composition is melted and melt-kneaded in the absence of modifying agents such polyisobutylenes as employed in Chu. Accordingly, claims 8 and 14 are believed to be patentable over the references of record for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Claims 9-13 and 15-19 depend variously from claims 8 and 14 and, thus, are also believed to be patentable over the references of record.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claims 1, 2 and 4-19 are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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